DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 093 408 JC 740 221

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TITLE Colleges without Walls But with Foundations: Integrated College and Communications Development in Saskatchewan.
PUB DATE 11 Jun 74
NOTE 14p.; Speech given before the International Institute on the Community College (Lambton College, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, June 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS College Role; *Community Colleges; *Community Involvement; Educational Radio; Instructional Materials; Mass Media; *Material Development; *Open Education; Post Secondary Education; School Community Relationship; Speeches; *Televised Instruction
IDENTIFIERS *Saskatchewan

ABSTRACT

The evolvement of the community college in Saskatchewan is discussed. The college concept, which is embodied in seven principles, is essentially one of a communtiy college in which the community is the campus--the "college" exists wherever its programs are offered. Existing school and community facilities are utilized. In the first year of operation, four pilot colleges offered approximately 1,000 different programs to over 11,000 students. The Saskatchewan Educational Communications Corporation has been set up to, initially, produce and acquire a wide range of educational materials for use in educational cable systems. An educational radio system will be developed in the future, and the Provincial Library will be strengthened to better serve its media distribution role. (DB)

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"COLLEGES WITHOUT WALLS BUT WITH FOUNDATIONS: INTEGRATED COLLEGE AND COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN" *

Speech Given at the International Institute on the Community College, Lambton College, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada,

June 11, 1974

Community colleges, the public library system and educational media had, prior to 1970, developed along essentially separate and uncoordinated lines within several Canadian provinces. Despite reverential statements regarding the services each other provided, college people, librarians, and those involved in the use of media for educational purposes had seldom attempted to face the problems of how learning, both formal and informal, could be promoted by joint action. It is therefore not surprising that Saskatchewan, one of the 'maverick' western provinces of Canada with a reputation for experimenting with novel social inventions, should be the site of an integrated approach to college, public library and educational communications development.

There is a firm historical foundation to adult education in the province of Saskatchewan. From its earliest days Saskatchewan was the home of a host of voluntary associations who used education as a means of attaining social and economic betterment for themselves and others. Community-based groups such as the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and the Credit Union Movement have been leading exponents of education for self-betterment. Combined with such groups as the Saskatchewan Agricultural Societies and the Homemakers, or

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Women's Institutes, you find a provincial network of people who have encouraged adult learning to achieve better ways of doing things. Today nine out of ten farmers belong to some sort of cooperative in Saskatchewan. In addition, over 100 voluntary associations have adult learning programmes of some description.

The University of Saskatchewan has, for over two generations, made its resources and information available through its Extension Departments. Along with the University of Alberta and St. Frances Xavier University of Antigonish, Saskatchewan would be among those universities that have deep historical roots of service to the people of their regions.

With the election of the first democratic socialist government in 1944 the Saskatchewan Department of Education established its first Adult Education Branch. The Branch's aims were to (a) liquidate social, scientific and language illiteracy; (b) to help clarify the thinking of citizens regarding fundamental issues affecting modern society; (c) to evoke responsible and cooperative citizen action, and (d) to encourage integrated and creative community life. A regionalized approach was established whereby field men were to set the stage for issue-centred study, secure appropriate resources and advise local committees on discussion methods and subsequent action.

The Department of Education was to provide "appropriate and acceptable study material on any topic of interest to a group of citizens who aim at some constructive action in the community". This they did by either arranging distribution to existing sources or developing resources where none existed. By the 1950's there were 10 regional field men throughout the province with regional coordinating committees to develop extensive programmes in the Arts,

Public Affairs, International Affairs and Human Relations.

With a change of government in 1963 several significant changes were to come about. A Centre for Community Studies, established in 1957 under the joint sponsorship of the Province of Saskatchewan and the university to conduct applied community research, had its provincial funds withdrawn in 1964. In 1966 the Adult Education Branch was phased out of existence and the emphasis was shifted to the expansion of the technical training capabilities of Institutes of Applied Arts and Sciences.

By 1971 it was evident that some form of re-assessment was required of post-school education in the province. University enrolments were not reaching projected numbers; the technical institutes were unable to accommodate applicants; and adult education programmes were offered by some school boards and not others.

The creation of community colleges had been discussed in Saskatchewan for almost a decade. A Commission chaired by Dr. J.S. Spinks, President of the University of Saskatchewan, recommended in 1967 that a college system be created to provide "middle range education". In 1970 a Special Advisory Committee reported to the Minister of Education urging the creation of a system of "Colleges of Applied Arts and Sciences" which would be based upon the already existing technical vocational facilities in the province's four largest cities. The unpublished report included a draft of college legislation.

With the advent of a provincial election in the spring of 1971 it appeared that college development might become an issue. The Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning, the provincial adult education association, attempted to add the issue of college development to the politician's agenda. When the late

Premier Thatcher, in an address to a Young Liberal Rally, intimated that a college system's major role would be the provision of the first two years of university - essentially a junior college model - the Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning publicly protested such a narrow function and urged both the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party, then the Official Opposition, to support a more community-oriented approach to college development and operations.

The NDP avoided a direct confrontation on the issue but emphasized an alleged lack of Liberal leaderhsip in educational matters. The NDP "New Deal" did, however, promise the establishment of regional educational centres to bring educational opportunities closer to the people of Saskatchewan. It also promised to expand opportunities for educational upgrading and re-training for adults.

With the election of an NDP government, the Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning urged that a new look be taken not only at the future role of any colleges but also the process by which they would be introduced. Such an appeal had an early response as the Minister of Education, the Honourable Gordon MacMurchy, called two invitational conferences to discuss college development in the province. The first meeting, held on October 8, 1971, was primarily to assess the existing draft legislation. It was generally agreed that the proposed legislation was too narrow in scope, emphasizing essentially academic and technical-vocational development, but expressing virtually no concern for the growth of community education and development. There was general agreement that colleges in Saskatchewan must be based on community

education and development and grow to meet the unique needs of their region. The existing draft legislation was therefore laid aside.

At a second conference on December 1, 1971, participants emphasized that community-oriented colleges would be developed only if a process was used in which the assistance and commitment of local people was gained. It was also urged that a priority be given to meeting the needs of rural people in the development of any college system.

Following the December conference Mr. MacMurchy appointed an Advisory Committee on the Community Colleges with myself as Chairman. Not only the chairman but also six others of the nine-person Advisory Committee were members of the Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning. As such we had been among those who had called for a broader, more community-oriented approach to college development and operation at the invitational conferences as well as earlier. The Committee's terms of reference were brief; they would clarify the role of any community colleges and advise on the "educational process throughout the province which would foster understanding of the philosophy and potential of community college development". The Committee was also to advise the Minister on other matters affecting college development including identification of criteria concerning the community's readiness for a college and the implementation of college policy throughout the province. Finally, it was charged with conducting a series of public meetings and hearings throughout the province to gain the ideas of interested citizens.

A consensus developed regarding the general principles of college development during the two invitational conferences. As chairman of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Community Colleges, I was asked to work with departmental

officials in drafting principles which might be a basis for discussion at any future public meetings. Finally, seven principles of college development were agreed upon, as follows:

(i) A community college's major responsibility is to promote formal and informal adult learning in its regional community.

(ii) Programmes are to be developed in response to the expressed concerns of a community which has identified and assessed its needs.

(iii) A community college shall provide individual and group counselling in the establishment and achievement of educational goals.

(iv) A community college shall assist in community development by offering programmes of community education and service. In rural areas it will serve as a mechanism for the maintenance and development of a viable way of life.

(v) A community college shall not duplicate existing educational services or facilities for adults; rather, it shall coordinate the delivery of all adult educational services to the community.

(vi) A community college shall be governed by a council representative of the region.

(vii) The operation of a community college shall be under the purview of the Minister of Education.

Beginning in April of 1972 some 54 meetings were held throughout Saskatchewan. The format of the meetings was simple. A committee member presented the college concept as embodied in the seven principles. Clarifying questions and comments were followed by group discussions as to how a relevant college might serve the local community. Some 2,000 people attended and although a wide ranging discussion of these principles was engendered, a consensus emerged which permitted the construction of a practical working model.

The Committee Report was presented to the Minister on August 15, 1972. By October of that year most of the Report's 48 recommendations were accepted and four college pilot areas were designated in geographically different parts of the province.* The Parkland Community College in the Yorkton-Melville area would serve a population of 83,000 in the central eastern portion of Saskatchewan. The Carleton-Trail College based in Humboldt-Lanigan area would serve a population of 62,000 people in central Saskatchewan. The Cypress Hills College would serve a population of 65,000 people in the southeast corner of Saskatchewan. The LaRonge College would serve a population of 6,000 people, over half of whom are of Indian ancestry, in the north-central portion of the province. The concept is essentially of a community college in which the community is the campus. The "college" exists wherever its programmes are offered. There is no intention of launching upon a building campaign or a programme of campus construction. Existing school and community facilities are utilized in all college regions.

College developers, experienced in community education, were immediately sent into the regions to assist local advisory committees and groups as they assessed their community's needs and its resources. As the time for the establishment of a College Act and councils approached, the developers advised on potential programmes and the composition of college councils. The college is chiefly a coordinating and facilitating agency rather than a programming institution. The existing resources of a variety of government and voluntary agencies are used whenever possible.

Unique inter-agency relations are developing. The provincial library system with over 250 branches will serve as the college's library-media

* See appendix

distribution system. The University of Saskatchewan will provide its programmes on a contractual basis upon request from regional college councils, as will the three provincial technical-vocational institutes. Thus, colleges have no capacity of their own to offer university transfer programmes or higher cost technical-vocational programmes. They are, however, offering programmes of their own in a wide range of adult education programmes making full use of local people as instructors.

Presently a typical full-time staff of a community college in Saskatchewan is a principal, a secretary-treasurer, one or two regional coordinators or programme consultants, one field representative and appropriate secretarial support staff. Several colleges have a number of farmers, housewives, and other local people as part-time programme coordinators. These people, operating out of satellite facilities, assist others in identifying and meeting their local needs.

In the first year of operation the four colleges offered approximately 1,000 different programmes to over 11,000 students - almost four times the number of programmes and students served the previous year in the four regions. Participation rates in the first year have been impressive. For example, eight and a half percent of the total population fifteen years and older in the Carlton Trail Community College region and eight percent of the same age group in the Parkland Community College participated in a formal programme during the past year.

The Research and Evaluation of the Department of Continuing Education, under the leadership of Dr. Alex Guy, has introduced a number of essential services for the colleges. A programme account budgeting system which provides

detailed information on the state of individual as well as total programme expenditures for each college is operated using the provincial computer facilities in Regina. The Branch, in cooperation with the colleges, also uses the computer facilities to maintain a provincial student accounting system which includes all post-secondary students in the province to gain greater predictability in educational planning.

While the first year of the college pilot operations were in process, study was undertaken to develop recommendations leading to the formation of an educational communication policy. These recommendations were to create an integrated approach to community college, provincial library, and telecommunication policy, insofar as it affects education. A number of major recommendations were made regarding the establishment of a Saskatchewan Educational Communications Corporation to be known as SASKMEDIA. SASKMEDIA was to produce, acquire, distribute and sell video-audio film, print and other educational materials. It was to develop a province-wide educational FM radio network to be known as Radio Saskatchewan. Both SASKMEDIA and the education system generally were to encourage the principle of citizen access whereby community-based voluntary associations would be able to use the educational media resources of the education system including programming on Radio Saskatchewan.

It was proposed that the provincial library system of Saskatchewan be used as the provincial media distribution division of SASKMEDIA. It was to act as the library-media distribution system of community colleges. It was further recommended that a telecommunication network be established between

all major libraries in the province for purposes of transmitting not only inter-library loan requests but also community college budgetary data and other information.

Finally, community colleges were to act as regional educational communication resource centres. They were to have educational media specialists who would serve the wider-community in a variety of ways. In rural regions they would assist as programme coordinators for the production of local educational FM radio programmes on Radio Saskatchewan.

In urban centers, college personnel would play an animation role in the use of community educational cablevision. The Province of Saskatchewan has adopted a joint public-cooperative approach to cablevision development. Sasktel, the provincial crown telecommunications agency, will own the microwave and cable systems. Local cablevision co-operatives will run the cable stations and operating surpluses will be ploughed back for community or educational programmes. It is hoped that through the joint efforts of SASKMEDIA and the colleges, more worthy use of this potential educational tool will be made.

Last month the Saskatchewan Educational Communications Corporation Act was passed by the Saskatchewan Legislature. Its initial role will be chiefly geared to the production and acquisition of a wide range of educational materials for use in educational cable systems. The Provincial Library will be strengthened to better serve its media distribution role. The development of educational radio system will take place after the early stages of the Corporation's development has been successfully carried out.

The college concept in Saskatchewan is unique in Canadian terms. It has grown from the experience and needs of that province. However, several compar-

ative observations may be useful. Much of its method of operation is based on the university extension model, which grew most rapidly in several provinces during the early 1920's. Its philosophy and approach to learning for rural betterment echoes the concerns of Grundtvig and those in the Danish folk school movement who are credited with reviving rural life in that country.

There were more than philosophical influences at work as the Advisory Committee struggled with its task. Saskatchewan was in yet another stage of agricultural recession. The choice was to use existing facilities or do nothing. It was estimated that scrapping building and campus-type approaches to college services would save at least forty million dollars in capital costs as well as millions of dollars in operating expenditures. The Advisory Committee opted for money for programmes rather than buildings.

The Committee was acquainted with many of the problems encountered in traditional educational systems. Its hope is that the initial emphasis on community education and development, the use of local people in its process, and the creation of small administrative and professional units in the college system will reduce, if not prevent, early organizational institutionalization and ossification.

Certainly college administrators will not have the pressure of programming to justify the use of campuses or buildings. With this constraint removed, a greater degree of responsiveness to the fundamental learning needs of people in rural Saskatchewan appears to be developing. The use of the satellite approach to college operations will create constant demands for decentralization of programmes which, if regionally centralized, would prove of little use to many rural-farm people.

The colleges without walls in Saskatchewan are founded on a firm historical base, cemented by a tradition of community cooperation and a special breed of dedicated educator in Saskatchewan. Educational traditionalists have predicted that Saskatchewan colleges will devolve into conventional colleges. The Advisory Committee and the Department have attempted to prevent this seemingly inexorable process by structural, legislative and other means. In the end, however, the response of Saskatchewan people will determine the efficacy of their college system.

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

AUG 9 1974

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE REGIONS - APRIL, 1974